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Soviet spy ring closing technology gap: U.S.

PARIS [UPI]—The Soviet Union has created a new espionage network with the express purpose of stealing Western technological secrets and applying them to military uses, U.S. officials warned Tuesday.

The organization, which has about 20,000 members, was formed specifically to reduce the technological gap between the Western alliance and the Soviet Union and already has shown remarkable success, the officials said.

Insisting on anonymity, the officials disclosed the existence of the new spy ring at a two-day meeting of the Coordinating Committee for Exports to Communist Areas in an effort to halt the "hemorrhaging" of Western technology secrets to the Soviet Union.

DELEGATES FROM Japan and all members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization except Iceland attended a briefing in which U.S. officials appealed for an immediate halt in the sale of 150 sensitive items to the East.

During the last two years, the officials said, U.S. intelligence organizations "started a major effort to find out what Western technology was being used by the Soviets in their weapons."

"We received information from former KGB officials who defected and from

other sources that led to clues that were chased down," one of the officials told correspondents.

"They established an organization of 20,000 with the express purpose to track down things that can be acquired legally—technical data, specifications and so forth—and things that can be acquired through espionage."

MANY CIVILIAN items that are even more sophisticated than military technology can be bought legally and then converted to weapons use, he said.

The officials said "the hemorrhage comes from the United States primarily, also a tremendous amount from Japan and some in Western Europe."

They said the leaks have reduced the previous 10- or 15-year East-West technological gap to less than two years. They said 150 Western items have been "incorporated into Soviet weapons systems," including night vision equipment and technology for the SS-20 missiles.

As part of their presentation, the U.S. delegates displayed a Soviet buoy used for submarine detection. The device, they said, is "a direct copy of microelectronics developed by the United States. The Soviets had improved their version so their buoys now are more advanced than ours."